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ABSTRACT

The contents of this document include a paper describing a contract approach in the fundamentals of speech course and the syllabus for the course taught for the last six quarters at Florida State University. The course description outlines the objectives, grading procedures, and requirements for successfully fulfilling the performance contract signed by each student. The syllabus describes the contents of the course and lists the instructional materials. (RB)

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A Contract Approach to a Fundamentals of Speech Course

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The fundamentals of speech course presents some unique problems to the instructors directing and teaching the course. For most students is its the only course in oral communication they take while in college. At many schools it is a required course for many other departments. At most schools it serves as a foundation for other courses in the speech communication department. Since it is usually a multisection course, a variety of instructors in the department teach the course. These characteristics of the beginning speech course present some of the justification for standardizing the fundamentals of speech course at an individual school. The standardization that is most meaningful and useful is to establish the minimum competencies that all students who pass the course will possess. One approach to establishing and using these criterion referenced methods of evaluating is to use a contract approach. Simply stated, contract teaching gives the student a choice of determining beforehand the grade he would like to work for. The criteria for receiving each grade is clearly defined so the student knows at all times where he stands and what additional work he needs to do to receive his target grade.

The contract approach to the fundamentals of speech course can have advantages in addition to standardizing the basic criteria for all students who receive a passing grade. In many cases, students feel that our grading is arbitrary since we only communicate vague standards to the student. With a contract approach the student is told the first day of class the exact criteria that he has to meet for each grade. Normative grading procedures that are commonly

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used in most speech communication classes are too dependent on who happens to be enrolled in a particular section. If unusually capable students are enrolled in a section, a student who meets the normal standards for a passing grade could receive a failing grade. On the other hand, if the section enrolls less capable students or if the teacher does not teach well, the student may receive a passing grade even though he does not meet the normal standards for a passing grade. The contract approach provides a safeguard against these idiosyncrasies of normative grading. Another advantage of a contract approach is that it can be used to remove some of the lock-step forcing of each student to have exactly the same learning experiences. It provides a method of individualizing instruction.

This paper will describe a fundamentals of speech course that has been taught successfully for six quarters at the Florida State University. The sections of the course have been taught by a number of graduate assistants with varied backgrounds in speech communication. For most of them this was their first experience in teaching a beginning speech class. Three different faculty members have been responsible for supervising the graduate assistants.

In establishing this particular contract we were trying to accomplish two goals : (1) to establish minimum standards and learning experiences that would be shared by all students who receive a grade of "C" or better, and (2) to provide an opportunity for students working for an "A" or "B" to have some freedom in selecting additional learning experiences that would be meaningful to them. To accomplish these goals, the quarter is divided into a required phase and an optinnal phase. Upon successfully completing the required phase, the student has earned a "C" in the course. He may elect to settle for the "C" and stop attending the class, or he may choose to enter the optional phase and work toward the "A" or "B" contract.

In establishing the standards for the required phase, we wanted to actually raise the quality of the performance that a "C" student would have exhibited when we had graded on a normative basis. Each student who makes a "C" now would have received a "C+" or "b-" if they had taken the course prior to the establishment of the contract. The work for the required part of the course is divided into knowledge of theory and performance. Each of the eight required activities has firmly established minimum standards that each student has to meet. The student must meet the standards for all eight activities to complete the required phase. If the student fails to meet any of these criteria the first time he tries, he must repeat the activity until he reaches the satisfactory level.

The knowledge of theory comes from three programmed learning units and from two short paperback textbooks. One of these is assigned each week for the first five weeks of the quarter. To test the student's knowledge of theory, he takes a test over the assigned material the last class period of the week. Each of the tests has twenty questions and the student must answer at least fourteen correctly. If he does not pass the test, he must retake different forms of the test outside of class time until he passes it. Tests must be repeated until the student reaches criterion. Repeating tests on a unit forces the student to learn the material. On our traditional one-shot tests, a student who makes "D" or "F" on a test seldom goes back and relearns the material. With this contract he must learn the material to receive a passing grade in the course. To encourage the students to study the two paperback textbooks more thoroughly, additional credit is given in the optional phase for scores of seventeen or higher on the tests.

In addition to passing the five tests on theory, the student must meet the requirements for three oral communication activities. For group discussion, the students are divided into small groups which participate in problem solving discussions. The group produces a paper reflecting their discussion. The

paper must meet ten criteria to be acceptable. The group continues to work on the paper until it meets all of the criteria. The other two oral activities are an informative speech and a persuasive speech. For each speech the student is given given a list of criteria and is told what would be a satisfactory level of performance. If the student does not meet this level the first time he gives the speech, he has to rework the speech and give it again. He continues this process until he reaches a satisfactory level.

The criteria for each of the three activities are set up so they require a minimum of value judgments from the instructor. For example, on the informative speech the student must meet at least six of the following eight requirements: the introduction must be attention getting; a preview of the body of the speech must be given; the student must develop three identifiable main points; the student must include at least two forms of supporting material; the student must adequately summarize the main points of his speech in his conclusion; the student must maintain acceptable eye contact; the student's movement and posture should be appropriate; and the student must use only one notecare while delivering the speech.

After completing these eight requirements if the student elects to go into optional phase, he has a choice of activities available to him. Some of the activities call for him to make oral presentation in class. Other options require passing tests on theory or writing papers about his observations of the oral activities of others. These activities are divided into four sections: interpersonal communication, group communication, public speaking, and aesthetic communication. To provide a variety of learning experiences, no student may repeat any activity and for an "A" he must have points from at least three of the sections. A "B" requires points from at least two sections. For some of the activities, such as reaching the criterion level on a test, the student is awarded a definite number of points. For the other activities, a point spread based on difficulty is assigned to the activity and the student is awarded points within

that spread depending on the quality of his performance. To reach the "B" level the student must total twenty points and he needs thirty points for an "A".

The required phase of this contract provides assurances that all of the students receiving a passing grade in the fundamentals of speech course can meet established minimum standards. The optional phase allows the better students to broaden their experiences and to have some selection in choosing the activities they find meaningful. It also solves the problem of arbitrary grades, offered opportunities for success to students who have not had prior experiences in speech communication classes, and provides individualized instruction.

Speech Communication 105, Fundamentals of Speech

Syllabus

Speech 105, Fundamentals of Speech, is taught on a contract basis. At the end of the fifth or sixth week of classes the student will be asked to declare whether he is working for an "A", "B", or "C" grade. At any time during the quarter he will be allowed to reconsider his decision. The student cannot make a higher grade than he contracts for.

The work for the quarter is divided into two phases: a required phase and an optional phase. Successful completion of the required phase gives a "C" in the course. Those students contracting for an "A" or "B" will continue into the optional phase. The student cannot receive credit for the optional phase until he has fully completed the required phase. "A", "B", and "C" grade requirements are described below.

The course is organized so that students should satisfy all criteria for a "C" by the end of the fifth or sixth week of classes. Then the student has the final weeks of the quarter in which to earn an "A", or "B". If the student fails to meet all criteria of the grade for which he has contracted, he will receive the grade for the level he has reached.

All work for the quarter must be completed by the last day of classes. Since the course is on a contract, the instructor will not assign an incomplete grade to anyone. If the student only completed six or seven of the eight criteria in the required phase, he will receive a "D". If he completes less than six, he will receive an "F".

I. Required Phase: "C" Criteria

The student is required to receive a "Satisfactory" on five unit tests and three performance activities to reach "C" criteria.

A. Tests on Theory

The student is required to take at least one unit test per week and make a test score of 15 out of 29 for a "Satisfactory". The student must take each unit test as many times as he needs in order to reach the satisfactory level. The tests are scheduled one a week on the last day of classes for that week. If the student does not pass the test the first time, he must go to the Learning Center in 307 Diffenbaugh to retake the unit tests.

The unit tests are objective multiple-choice tests. Each unit test covers one of the five testbooks for the course. There will be 20 questions on each unit test. The unit test are the only required test for Cph 105. There will be no mid-term or final examination.

The units are :

Unit I The Communication Process
Text: A Program on the Process of Communication, by King, Thomas R., Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1972.

Unit 2 Group Discussion
Text: Effective Group Discussion, Second Edition, by Brihart, John K., Wm. C. Borwn Co. Publishers, 1974, Chapter 1-6.

Unit 3 Speech Preparation
Text: A Program on Speech Preparation, by Markle, Marsha K., and Thomas R. King, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1972.

Unit 4 Public Speaking
Text: Putting the Message Together, Second Edition, by Mills, Glen E. The Bobb-Merrill Co., Inc., 1972.

Unit 5 Supporting Materials
Text: A Program on Supporting Material, by Crocket, Patricia H. and Thomas R. King, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1972.

B. Performance

The three performances activities for "C" criteria include (1) a group discussion project, (2) an informative speech, and (3) a persuasive speech. The student must meet certain criteria on each of the performance activities in order to receive a "Satisfactory" grade. The student must repeat any activity until he reaches criteria. The criteria for each performance activity are given below:

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1. Group Discussion Performance

The students will be divided into five groups. Each group will discuss a campus, city, or county problem of their own choosing. The procedure for determining the problem, discovering information pertinent to the problem, and finding the best solution will be left to the group to decide. The group will be required to write a paper which meets the following criteria:

The problem must be worded in an acceptable form.
The key terms must be defined.
The effects of the problem must be given.
The causes of the problem must be given.
The criteria used by the group for achieving the group goal must be stated.
All of the possible solution must be stated.
The possible solutions must be checked against the criteria.
The group must give the best solution to the problem.

The paper must be double spaced, type-written and be correct in spelling and grammar. Each member of the group should proof-read the group's paper before signing his name. The group can decide not to permit any member to sign the paper if the member did not adequately contribute to his group. The group must receive a "Satisfactory" on the paper in order to reach "C" criteria. The group must repeat the activity if it does not reach criteria.

Those students who are not permitted to sign the group paper can choose between two alternatives in order to reach "C" criteria. First, the student may form another group of at least four members who also were not allowed to sign the group paper from any Sph 105 section, and discuss a new problem and write a "Satisfactory" paper. Second, the student may elect not to repeat the exercise and receive a grade lower than the criteria he has reached at the end of the term. This alternative has the effect of lowering the student's grade one letter.

2. Informative Speech

Each student will give a four to five minute informative speech in class. The student may choose any topic which is appropriate for his speech. Seven of the following eight criteria must be met by the student in order to receive a "Satisfactory" on his speech. The criteria are:

The introduction must be attention-getting.
A Preview of the body of the speech must be given.

The student must develop three identifiable main points.
The student must include at least two forms of supporting material.
The student must adequately summarize the main points of his speech in his conclusion.
The student must maintain acceptable eye contact.
The student's movement and posture should be appropriate.
The student must use only one notecard while delivering the speech.
The student must repeat the speech activity if he does not receive a "Satisfactory."

3. Persuasive Speech

Each student will present a four to five minute persuasive speech in class. The student may select any topic appropriate for his speech. Eight of the following nine criteria must be met in order to reach a "Satisfactory" level. Those criteria marked with an asterisk must be included in the eight criteria on the speech. The criteria for the persuasive speech are:

The student's introduction must be attention-getting.
*The student must demonstrate a need to his listeners.
*The student must include a workable plan.
*The student must present the desirable benefits of his proposed plan.
The student must enhance his persuasiveness in the conclusion.
The student must include at least three identifiable items of supporting material.
The student's nonverbal must be consistent with his verbal message.
The student's eye contact should be appropriate.
The student should use one notecard for the reference.
The student must repeat the persuasive speech if he does not reach "Satisfactory" level.

The criteria in the required phase must be met by all students. Those students who wish to meet criteria for an "A" or "B" should continue into the optional section of the syllabus.

II. Optional Phase: "A" and "B" Criteria.

To receive a "B" grade the student must earn a minimum of 20 points; and "A" requires a minimum of 30 points. The student earns points by performing activities which are described in the syllabus. The minimum and maximum point values are listed beside each activity. The instructor will award points based upon the quality of the performance. The total of the student's points from all of his chosen activities will constitute his grade.

The student working for an "A" grade must choose at least one activity from three of the four sections. The student working for a "B" must choose at least one activity from at least two out of the four sections. The student may not repeat any activity.

During the Optional Phase, the student who has not completed the required phase will be allowed to work on the activities of the optional phase. Any points he earns will be held in escrow until he has completed the required phase.

Section I Interpersonal Communication

A. Observation Experience (1-6 points)

A pair of students combines on this activity to design and record their own observation experience in interpersonal communication. The students should create a situation in which they will be able to observe various aspects of interpersonal communication such as verbal, and nonverbal communication, feedback, etc.

An interesting way to handle this experience is for the students to modify their behavior and observe the changes in their interpersonal communication. For example, the students may vary their style of dress and perceive the reactions which they receive accordingly.

The partners should jointly plan and observe their experiences. A three to four page explaining thoroughly the experience and the effects observed should be typed for the instructor. The students should emphasize non-verbal communication, feedback, and give their own interpretations of the meaning.

B. Readings (4 points)

The student should read the following selected materials on interpersonal communication and make a score at least 11 on a 15 item quiz given on the materials. The student may retake the test if necessary.

1. Communication: The Transfer of Meaning, by Don Fabun, The Glencoe Press, 1968.

2. An Introduction to Interpersonal Communication, by James McCroskey, Carl L. Larson, and Mark L. Knapp, Prentice-Hall Inc., 1971, Chapters 2 & 3.

3. Interpersonal Speech-Communication: Elements and Structures, by John W. Keltner, Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1970. Chapters 5 & 6.

Section 2 Group Discussion

C. Test Score (3 points)

A students earning a grade of 18 or more on the Unit II test covering Brilhart's Effective Group Discussion will receive 3 additional points toward his total number of points. The student may retake the test if necessary.

D. Problem-Solving Group Discussion (2-7 points-individual)
(0-3 points-group)

A five to six member group of students should be formed to discuss a state problem. The group should meet outside of class to determine the discussion question and to plan the group's order of procedure. The complete discussion from definition through the best solution should be held during a class period and should be 35-40 minutes in length. During the group discussion the instructor will observe the group and grade each student individually according to his participation in and his contribution to the group. The instructor will also grade the entire group according to its problem, solutions and procedures. A student participating in the group should total his individual and group points to determine his grade for this activity.

E. Observation and Evaluation Experience (2-5 points)

The student should choose a "natural" discussion group outside class to observe and evaluate in the form of a typed paper. The student should evaluate the discussion using at least three of the rating forms given in Chapter 16 of Oral Decision-Making by Braden and Bradenburg, and Chapter 8 of Effective Group Discussion by Brilhart. The student must provide his own rating forms. The paper should be 3 to 4 pages in length and should include a description of the group observed, the situation, the topic under discussion, the rating forms used to evaluate, and a summary critique of the group's performance as observed by the student.

Section 3 Public Speaking

F. Test Score (3 points)

A student earning a score of 18 or more on the Unit IV text covering Message Preparation: Analysis and Structure will receive an additional 3 points toward his total number of points. The student may retake the test if necessary.

G. Informative Speech with Poster-Type Visual Aid (2-7 points)

The student should select an informative topic which lends itself to the use of a poster-type visual aid. The speech should be four to five minutes in length. The speech should meet the criteria described for the informative speech in the required section.

H. Persuasive Sales Speech (2-7 points)

The student should prepare a five-minute sales speech using the product as a visual aid. The speech should meet the criteria for the persuasive speech in the required section. The conclusion should actuate the audience to buy the product.

I. Informative Symposium (2-7 points-individual)
(0-3 points-group)

Five or six students should work together on an informative symposium with a subject area of their choice. The group should meet outside class to assign the topics and prepare for the class presentation. The symposium should be given in class and should be 30 minutes in length. Each of the group members should give a short, prepared speech presenting a different facet or point of view about the subject area. One of the group members should act as chairman to introduce the symposium, introduce each speech, provide transition between speeches, and conclude the symposium.

Each student will receive individual points for his part in the symposium and the group will receive a separate number of points based on the quality of all of the speeches in the group. The student should total his individual and group points to determine his points for this activity.

J. Observation Experience (1-4 points)

The student should attend a speech outside class and write an evaluation paper of the experience. The paper should be three pages in length and should include a critique of the speaker and his message applying the student's knowledge of the public speaking textbooks used in the required part of the course.

Section 4 Aesthetic Speech

K. Oral Reading (2-7 points)

The student should select a reading appropriate to a five-minute presentation to be given in class. The procedure and criteria for the oral reading may be found in:

The Oral Interpretation of Literature, by Chloe Armstrong and Paul Brandes, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963. Chapter 6.

L. Observation Experience (1-4 points)

The student should attend a major production of the Department of Theatre or a Studio Theatre production and write a three-page critique of the production. The paper should not be a summary of the plot of the play. It should discuss specifically how each of the elements of the production helped or hindered the communication of the author's message.

Extra Credit:

The student may earn 2 points by participating in an experiment sponsored by the College of Communication.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is compulsory during the required phase and on the organizational days of each week during the optional phase. The student should attend the other days that students elect to present oral products.

Speech Communication 105 Record

Name _____

Required Phase (Record the test scores and check the performances when they are satisfactory).

Unit I Test _____

Unit 2 Test _____

Unit 3 Test _____

Unit 4 Test _____

Unit 5 Test _____

Group Performance _____

Informative Speech _____

Persuasive Speech _____

All tests with a score of 15 or above are "Satisfactory". If the Unit 2 and 4 tests have a score of 18 or above are worth 3 points under C and F in the Optional Phase.

When all eight items are "Satisfactory", the student has completed the required Phase and has earned a "C" in the course.

Optional Phase (Record the points earned below).

Section 1

A. (1 to 6 points) _____

B. (4 points) _____

Section 2

C. (3 points) _____

D. (1 to 7 points) _____

E. (2 to 5 points) _____

Section 3

F. (3 points) _____

G. (2 to 7 points) _____

H. (2 to 7 points) _____

I. (1 to 4 points) _____

J. (1 to 4 points) _____

Section 4

K. (2 to 7 points) _____

L. (1 to 4 points) _____

EXTRA CREDIT _____

_____

To earn an "A" the student must total 30 points with points coming from at least 3 of the 4 sections.

To earn a "B" the student must total at least 20 points with points coming from at least 2 of the 4 sections.